United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Uzbekistan, Niger, Croatia, Zimbabwe, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Israel, Belgium (also on behalf of the European Community), United Kingdom and Sweden among speakers in General Assembly's general debate today.

- Norway, Tunisia, Australia, Côte d'Ivoire, Iceland, Chile, Djibouti and Albania among speakers in general debate yesterday.

- UNPROFOR and NATO Commanders meet in Zagreb today to discuss setting up permanent joint staff for possible implementation of Bosnian peace plan.

- Secretary-General of Pan Africanist Congress of Azania tells Anti-Apartheid Committee that international sanctions against South Africa should remain in place pending election of majority government; calls Transitional Executive Council "dummy institution".

- Greece and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia hold second direct meeting under auspices of Mediator Cyrus Vance; defer further talks until after Greek elections on October 10th.

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In an address to the General Assembly today, Islam Karimov, President of Uzbekistan, expressed concern about the conflict in Tajikistan and on the Tajik-Afghan border, stressing that it should be settled on the basis of international efforts. Uzbekistan would welcome the convening of a United Nations seminar on security, stability and cooperation in Central Asia, he said. The parties could discuss the possibility of setting up a system of regional security to preserve and restore peace through the use of collective sanctions of a diplomatic, financial and economic nature. He condemned extremism, terrorism, religious fanaticism and fundamentalism in any form and said his country was willing to provide further humanitarian aid to the Tajik people.

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Mr. Karimov also expressed concern about the problem of the illegal drug trade, saying that large-scale cooperation was needed to tackle it. He noted that a great deal of the narcotics consumed throughout the world originated in Central Asia, and said Uzbekistan would readily work with all countries and organizations to eliminate the "narcobusiness".

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President Mahamane Ousmane of Niger told the General Assembly today that it was essential that ways be found to curb the economic decline of more and more countries into least developed status. He called on the developed countries to demonstrate greater solidarity with them by agreeing to completely cancel the debts of the least developed countries. Niger had expected such a decision after the recent meeting of the Group of Seven most industrialized countries, he said, but regrettably they had not made it possible for the debtor countries to improve their repayment capability.

President Ousmane said he hoped that the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development would be an opportunity for the rich and the poor to join hands in the fight against famine and malnutrition. Also, in a few days, at the initiative of the Japanese Government there would be a conference on development in Africa, and Niger hoped that the necessary radical measures would emerge from that meeting to help resolve the problems of the African continent.

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Croatian President Franjo Tudjman today told the General Assembly that the examples of Croatia and of Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrated the weaknesses of the United Nations peace-keeping model. The classic mandate -- freezing the situation with a cease-fire -- did not resolve the conflict, but created new complications. In undertaking peace-keeping operations, some States tried to pursue their own policies and not the policy of the Security Council.

Reform required better use of diplomatic, economic, political and military pressure, and consistency in the implementation of peace-keeping mandates, President Tudjman continued. That approach, involving the selective use of force, could have prevented the escalation of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and reduced casualties among peace-keepers. Peace-keeping forces should be better trained and equipped for special missions, and the United Nations should have greater authority in the sensitive conduct of operations.

The President argued that the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Croatia had been misused by Serbian extremists and their promoters to freeze territorial gains and continue ethnic cleansing. The international community had allowed the Serbs to ignore Security Council resolutions, in spite of the fact that they had been clearly defined. If UNPROFOR's mandate

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was not amended within the next 48 hours in terms of an energetic implementation of relevant resolutions, Croatia would be forced to renounce the Force and ask it to leave the country by 30 November.

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The President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, today called on the developed countries to fulfil the target set 24 years ago by the General Assembly, of devoting 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance. He called too for an open and equitable international trading system to ensure the success of economic reform programmes undertaken by the African States.

While realizing that Africa's development was primarily their own responsibility, he said, those States had proceeded courageously to implement their side of the commitment made with the international community when the New Agenda for the Development of Africa was adopted in 1991. They had promoted regional and sub-regional economic cooperation and integration and sought to create an enabling environment for foreign and domestic investment. He therefore called on the international community to buttress those efforts by decisively addressing the problem of the continent's crushing debt burden.

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The President of Lithuania, Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas, today asked the United Nations to safeguard the interests of small states. Speaking in the General Assembly's general debate, he said that the future of a more integrated world lay in the democracy and individuality of free nations. The international community should be prepared to defend, with force if necessary, the sovereignty of even the smallest nations.

He warned that after the initial wave of euphoria about gaining democracy and freedom, continuing hardships could bring disillusionment in the post-communist countries. The world community could not afford to remain indifferent to that danger, he stressed. But it appeared that even the most authoritative international organizations lacked the coordinated action and initiative to provide effective assistance. Nostalgia still prevailed in many countries for the time when authoritarian governments guaranteed people their minimum needs, albeit at the expense of their freedom, and isolationist tendencies in the industrialized countries could greatly complicate the development of those countries, he said.

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Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev told the General Assembly today that the world community must focus on democracy, which was the main guarantee of security and development, and peace-making as the twenty-first century approached. The Russian Federation had made peace-making and the protection of human rights, particularly the rights of national minorities, its priority in foreign policy, first of all in the territory of the former Soviet Union. He called on all Members States to support proposals submitted by members of

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the Commonwealth of Independent States to the present session relating to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the struggle against international terrorism, and the protection of the environment.

Mr. Kozyrev proposed that a clear-cut concept of political leadership be defined on the part of the Security Council, that an effective United Nations military command be created under the Secretary-General's supervision, and that a procedure for the involvement of regional organizations be established. He also proposed the establishment of a special Council committee to improve the practices of peace-keeping operations, and said "stand-by" forces should be created for use on a case-by-case basis. A permanent international tribunal to deal with crimes against humanity would help prevent the recurrence of atrocities, he added.

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Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres today told the General Assembly that the time had come to lay the foundations for a new Middle East, saying that the scope of regional security must exceed the range of ballistic missiles. Israel had already reached agreement with Jordan on many complicated issues, and a full peace could be achieved between the two. He urged Syria to work for peace and Lebanon to return to a balanced policy, and to not be a "backyard for troublemakers". He added that wisdom was needed as much as financial support.

Mr. Peres stressed that the Middle East had great economic potential, and referred to the possibility of a "common market" in the region. Industry, agriculture, infrastructure, communications and tourism should all be developed. Unwarranted confrontation should be replaced with much-needed economic competition. Israel was determined to make the Agreement with the Palestinians a success and was committed to their economic advancement and security.

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In his address to the General Assembly today, Willy Claes, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Belgium, stressed the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. Speaking also in his capacity as President of the European Community's Council of Ministers, Mr. Claes said such organizations must become effective centres of decision and action, with a capacity for swift intervention on a regional scale.

Areas of stability, such as the European Community, should be established in every continent, with broad regional mechanisms to develop principles of peaceful and prosperous co-existence, he said. Neither the European Community nor the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) had been able to prevent the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, but the member States had learned that the deepening of their own internal relations -- more Europe rather than less Europe -- would strengthen the Community's role in promoting stability and peace in Europe and neighbouring areas.

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Regional integration could help contain the collective frustrations and anxieties which fuelled nationalist movements, Mr. Claes continued. It also provided a formidable incentive for economic growth and therefore a strategic element in combating poverty. Regional economic integration, he stated, increasingly eliminated the option of war from the thinking of the governments and peoples involved.

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Douglas Hurd, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, said today that everyone had to take responsibility for the decisions of the United Nations, for its successes and its failures. It was necessary to examine the tasks asked of it, he said, to ensure that they were defined properly and that the resources were available to meet them. If a mandate could not be fulfilled, it should not be given.

With respect to peace-keeping, he continued, unity of command at the highest levels was essential. For that reason, the United Kingdom had suggested that the creation of an expanded Planning and Operations Staff for Peace-keeping, based in New York, to provide the United Nations with the "nervous system" for which its present staff was not equipped. Britain had also welcomed recent senior appointments in the financial and administrative areas and proposals for a system of inspection "with teeth". The United Nations, he went on, would always be short of money, even if everyone paid up in full and on time. But it would be able to afford more operations if it ran the existing ones more economically.

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Swedish Foreign Minister Margaretha Af Ugglas today said that the United Nations should be able to react flexibly to dynamic situations in peace-keeping operations, with better provisions for planning and operations staff. She proposed that a forum for coordination and the exchange of information between the Security Council and troop contributors be set up for each major operation, and said United Nations colleges should be established to train peace-keepers. She urged Member States to pay their dues to the Organization, so that its credibility and prestige would not be undermined, but said the scale of assessments should be adjusted in accordance with the principle of capacity to pay.

The Foreign Minister stressed the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, citing the agreement signed by the Organization and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in May. She also welcomed the statement by the Security Council that progress in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation could make a crucial contribution to the maintenance of peace and security. An early agreement on a comprehensive test ban would enhance that concept, she said.

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Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Bruntland told the General Assembly yesterday that the recent Accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which had been promoted by Norway, showed that even the deepest trench could be bridged. It was time to mobilize political and financial resources to aid the peace process, she said, adding that the economic situation in Gaza and in the West Bank called for immediate and extensive economic aid. Norway would provide substantial assistance and would continue to play a political role if the parties so desired.

The Prime Minister went on to say that ethnic nationalism was a threat to peace and stability everywhere, and that the doctrine of the ethnic state was a prescription for war. The task was to build communities which included, rather than excluded, and to make all multi-ethnic regions safe refuges of diversity. She called for a negotiated solution to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, stressing that Norway fully supported the efforts of international mediators Thorvald Stoltenberg and David Owen. International attention was focused on the terrible ordeal of the Muslims, but Croats and Serbs were also suffering, she said, stressing that humanitarian assistance should be evenhanded.

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Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Ben Yahia, in an address to the General Assembly yesterday, welcomed recent developments in the Middle East peace process, and appealed to the international community to bring about a just settlement of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He noted that his country and Algeria had recently concluded an agreement settling the boundary between them.

Mr. Ben Yahia said that the development of the Maghreb and the activities of the Maghreb Arab Union were in keeping with the current emphasis on regional groupings. He welcomed the process of change in South Africa and expressed satisfaction at the machinery recently developed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) for resolving disputes within Africa. He spoke of the dangers of extremism and terrorism, which were also masked in the guise of religion, and said the international community must redouble its efforts to defend a legal framework to combat such forms of terrorism.

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Australia's Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, told the General Assembly yesterday that economic and social deprivation continued to be a harsh reality in the world. The developed economies were limping and had failed to reach agreement on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) trade liberalization measures so necessary to kick-start world trade and economic growth. In the non-Western world, rates of growth had been very uneven, with spectacular advances in some regions, in particular East Asia, and continuing poverty in others.

Mr. Evans noted that there was no universal agreement on the problems which justified a security response by the international community. Australia

had prepared a study entitled "Cooperating for Peace" which suggested ways of clarifying the vocabulary used to define security problems. The criteria for embarking on peace operations -- whether peace-keeping or peace enforcement -- must be a clear-minded focus on objectives, and the likely effectiveness of the operation. The study contained one sustaining idea -- cooperative security -- which embraced common security and collective security. It emphasized reassurance rather than deterrence, and was inclusive rather than exclusive, he said.

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Amara Essy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, told the General Assembly yesterday that the primacy accorded in recent years to human rights, democracy and development had given rise to hope. The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna had been a pivotal event, and had reaffirmed the right to development. However, the world economy was weak; developed economies were in recession, and development in Africa had been impaired by depressed commodity prices.

Mr. Essy went on to say that effective economic integration was required for Africa's development, citing the examples of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Development Bank. International assistance was also needed in tandem with actions to address inequities at the macroeconomic level. He stressed the importance of concluding an international convention to combat desertification, and said the North-South dialogue must be revived to eradicate underdevelopment and poverty.

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In his address to the General Assembly yesterday, Iceland's Foreign Minister, Jon Baldvin Hannibalsson, said that if the Organization was to maintain credibility in the wake of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), it must take real action and achieve real results. The programme of action contained in "Agenda 21" provided a sound basis for individual and joint activities aimed at sustainable development, but did not cover all activities harmful to the environment.

As a nation overwhelmingly dependent on marine living resources, Iceland had supported efforts to establish an international regime covering all aspects of the uses of the oceans, Mr. Hannibalsson continued. In 1985, Iceland had ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provided a widely acceptable regime for the exploitation of the world's marine resources and established rules for a wide range of uses for the seas, thus reducing the potential for conflict among States. Iceland strongly supported the transformation of the Rio Declaration into an "Earth Charter", which defined States' responsibilities and rights of States in respect of the environment, before the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations in 1995.

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Chile's Foreign Minister Enrique Silva Cimma told the General Assembly yesterday that his country had always viewed economic development as inseparable from social development. He noted that the Chilean initiative for the convening of a world summit for social development had been positively received. The meeting, to be held in Copenhagen in 1995, would demonstrate the effectiveness of the United Nations in searching for solutions to global problems. The eradication of poverty, hunger and other social scourges was the task of the international community as a whole, under the leadership of the United Nations.

Chile advocated the strengthening of the role of the Secretary-General, particularly in relation to preventive diplomacy, the Foreign Minister went on to say. The membership of the Security Council should also be increased with a view to strengthening the United Nations. The various regions of the world should be duly represented, although the right of veto should not be extended to new permanent members. Therefore, he raised the possibility of the Council comprising permanent members, permanent members without the right of veto, regional members with an extended term and non-permanent members.

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Abdou Block, Foreign Minister of Djibouti, yesterday told the General Assembly that the United Nations was suffering from poor structuring. He called for the establishment of a rapid deployment force as an element of preventive diplomacy, and for the expansion of the membership of the Security Council to represent all regions of the world. He said that the Organization was suffering from an inability to mobilize peace-keeping forces, citing the examples of Mozambique, Bosnia and to a lesser degree, Somalia. He urged States to fulfil their obligations to the United Nations Operation in Somalia, as its success depended upon adequate financing.

Mr. Block said his country had instituted both financial and political reforms, but had been weakened by turmoil in the region. While Djibouti was stable and a refuge in a region subject to instability, it struggled to maintain its place in the world.

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Alfred Serreqi, Minister For Foreign Affairs of Albania, yesterday welcomed the presence in the General Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, whose stability, territorial integrity and international recognition were of great importance to the stability of the Balkans. The long war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other complex political developments had hindered efforts to restore Albania's ruined economy and promote the democratic process in the region. The United Nations must resort to all means at its disposal to implement the principles of the Charter and to make peace in the former Yugoslavia. Sanctions must be applied against the Belgrade authorities until a definitive solution to the crisis was found, including an overall improvement of the situation in Kosovo.

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The Albanian factor in the former Yugoslavia, especially with regard to Kosovo, was of crucial importance, Mr. Serreqi continued. The international community must take urgent measures to prevent the Bosnian tragedy from recurring in Kosovo. Albania had made it clear that placing Kosovo under the control and protection of the United Nations was the only way to prevent conflict and discourage the "silent ethnic cleansing" that Serbia was practicing there, he said.

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General Jean Cot, Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), and Admiral Mike Boorda, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Allied Forces South Commander, met in Zagreb today to discuss the setting up of a permanent joint staff to facilitate possible implementation of the peace plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to a statement issued by UNPROFOR.

A permanent NATO-UNPROFOR coordination staff would be located at Force Headquarters in Zagreb and at Kiseljk in Bosnia and Herzegovina and would be expanded upon acceptance of the plan by the parties.

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Benny Alexander, Secretary-General of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), today said that international sanctions against South Africa should remain in place pending the adoption of the new constitution and the election of a government controlled by the African majority. Addressing the Special Committee against Apartheid, he said that lifting sanctions now would only benefit the well-educated white minority, since the majority of multinational corporations involved in South Africa were technology intensive, rather than labour intensive.

He called South Africa's Transitional Executive Council a "dummy institution -- a typical colonialist trick to co-opt the natives". The PAC had decided not to take part in the work of the Council, which would be co-existing with the apartheid government and over whose decisions the De Klerk regime maintained key powers of veto. The PAC would continue to participate in negotiations, however, and would run for elections to the constituent assembly which would draft a new constitution, he said.

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The delegations of Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have concluded their second direct meeting pursuant to Security Council resolution 845 (1993), mediator Cyrus Vance said in a statement issued today. The meeting took place in a cordial and business-like atmosphere.

Both parties had agreed that further direct talks on the remaining issues between them should be deferred until after the Greek elections on 10 October, according to Mr. Vance. He said he would stand ready to facilitate the process, as requested by the Secretary-General.

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